

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jan 8th 2014

I see today's readings as follow-ups to those from earlier in the week. Yesterday, in the first reading we were given perspective on God's love. Today's first reading establishes its connection to Christian love. On Sunday, we celebrated the Epiphany, the manifestation of God on the Earth. Today's Psalm carries through this theme. The Gospel follows on yesterday's account feeding of the five thousand. Today we have Jesus walking on the water. In today's readings Jesus is presented as both God and man. He is given recognition of his mastery both in the Divine realm and in the physical world.

My reflection today takes me to two places on my own spiritual journey. I find myself drawn back the parish church of St. Pierre at Mont St. Michel. I also find myself considering the Call of the Temporal King at the beginning of the second week of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises.

Several years ago I attended Sunday Mass at the church for the community living outside the monastery at Mont St. Michel. What struck me most was the painting above the altar. It showed Jesus walking on the water (as we read in today's Gospel), but it also included St. Peter sinking into the waves (as we would have read in Matthew's version of this Gospel). I could not stop thinking how appropriate this work of religious art was for its context. During the monastery's active years, the parish church served a community of fishermen and their families. These people who could understand the power of the rough seas. My guess is they also were people whose faith was tested. I can imagine myself as part of this community. I can imagine myself contemplating St. Peter living through a tumultuous experience. I can imagine myself sinking into the waves because of the weakness of my faith. I can imagine a loving Christ intervening and pulling me up from the depths. I can imagine a personal Epiphany.

In different moments I find myself drawn to consider St. Ignatius' Call of the Temporal King. This reflection has a great political leader calling the individual to a noble cause. Maybe it was my cynicism, but I never really could comfortably create a mental picture with a living person in this role. In the last year this changed. In the new pope I have found a leader who can summon in me the desire for Christian service and love. I am not only gaining insight into the temporal king that Ignatius considers, but also to the even greater summons of the Christ (giving me another personal Epiphany).

Today I pray for the strength to respond to the King's call with the strength of Christian love and renewed faith.

Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognize his voice and call. Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise. Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith. Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his

love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature.

of our faith

-Pope Francis from a prayer to Mary, Mother of the Church and Mother

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